

3-9-1945

Wheeler Boy Aids in Taking Philippine Islands from the Japs (SGT Edison Clark) 3-9-1945

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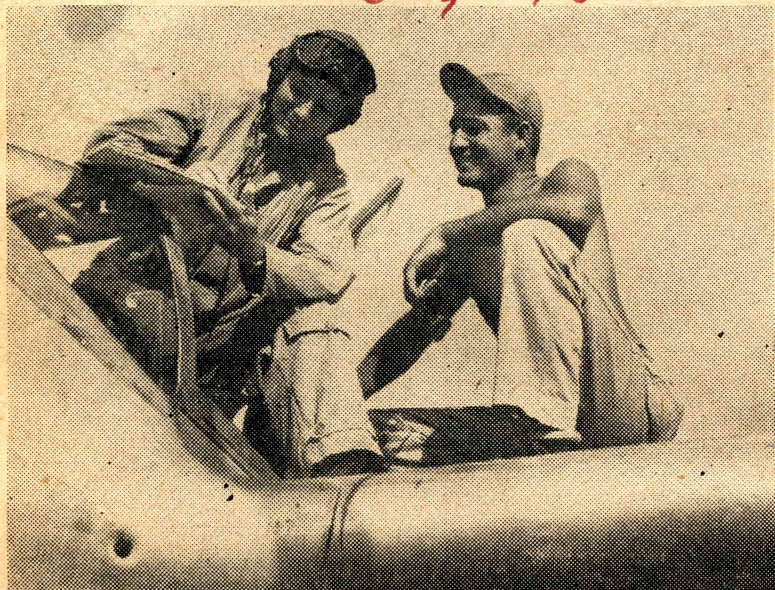
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WHEELER BOY AIDS IN TAKING PHILIPPINE ISLANDS FROM THE JAPS

3-4-45



Headquarters, 13th AAF, Southwest Pacific — With the first phase of the invasion completed, the 13th AAF has disclosed the part played by its photo reconnaissance unit in spearheading the veteran air force's shattering blows against Japanese in the Philippines.

The reconnaissance unit, in which two Illinois soldiers took part brought back the first serial photos of the Jap strongholds and airstrips knocked out by the 13th AAF before the infantry landed on Leyte I sland, in central Philippines.

The two Illinois air force men are First Lieutenant Max. E. Powell, of Hillview, Illinois, a pilot-photographer in the photo unit of the 13th AAF.

Sergeant Edison B. Clark, Wheeler, Illinois, crew chief of one of the photo reconnaissance planes

While pilots flew their P-38 Lightnings through the Zero-filled Philippine skies to take the vital pictures, ground men and laboratory technicians battled equipment shortages and terrific heat to turn out the photo graphs that guided the "Fightin 13" fighters and bombers to the targets.

Moving into position for the Philippine assignment, Lieutenant Powell and Sergeant Clark's unit landed on a Dutch East Indies island where the Japanese troops still fought and nightly bombing raids made sleep and rest difficult.

Laboratories were set up before
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tents and put on a 24-hour schedule. When a water shortage threatened to hold up production, the men gave up their showers and used the extra water to turn out more pictures.

It was the toughest mission yet undertaken by the unit, veteran of Guadalcanal, the Northern Solomons, Rabaul and Balikpapan. In the latter campaign, the camera planes paved the way for the record-breaking 2,500 mile flights of the 13th AAF's bombers, which struck major blows at the Borneo oil center, source of 35 percent of Japan's wartime fuel.

High-ranking officers of the "Fight-in' 13th" declared the latest mission, accomplished under extreme hardships, played an important part in the successful invasion of the Philippines.

Lieutenant Powell, son of Mr. and Mrs. George R. Powell, Hillview, has been on overseas service in the South and Southwest Pacific for more than ten months as a pilot-photographer. He has been presented the Air Medal and has been authorized to wear the battle stars on his Asiatic-Pacific campaign ribbon. Prior to entering the army he was a student at the University of Illinois.

Sergeant Clark, son of Mr. and Mrs. Harry A. Clark, Route 2, Wheeler, Illinois, has been overseas 26 months, all of which time he has been a mechanic on planes of the 13th AAF in the South and Southwest Pacific. He has four battle stars on his campaign ribbon.